

* 539 /351 cont./

any noise and go to my room. There I am going to sleep and on the next day show my body as it has become now." Then Miriápura Turíkaró, who was very vain, said: "No, you are coming with me now, in the daytime." The younger son knew what was going to happen, and he again refused to enter Bajsebowí by day, but Miriápura Turíkaró forced him to go with him to Bajsebowí. Then the younger son said: "All right, I am going with you."

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[763] In the meanwhile in the maloca of Bajsebowí the older brother already knew that his younger brother had been revived and that he was coming /352/ with Miriápura Turíkaró to the maloca of Bajsebowí. Then the older brother made a little bird appear, one that likes to live in the roofs of malocas, and they are a bad omen, for when they strike with their beaks on the top beam of the maloca, then someone in that maloca is going to die. In Tucano /Tucano/ this little bird is called Namákasero, and when it sings it says: "Uajtí-piatiamí-siú-siú-siú," which in Spanish means: "de allí salió un diablo /a devil came out of there/." After the older brother made the Namákasero appear, he sent one Namákasero to go up to the roof of the maloca to keep vigil, he sent another Namákasero to the front door of the maloca, and he sent another Namákasero to the back door of the maloca. Meanwhile the younger son and Miriápura Turíkaró were going toward the maloca of Bajsebowí. The younger son walked in front and Miriápura Turíkaró walked behind his son. When the Namákasero at the front door of the maloca of Bajsebowí saw them coming, it began to sing "Uajtí-piatiamí-siú-siú-siú" several times. Then the female Namákasero, which was on the back door of the maloca, answered, "Níto uajtí, níto uajtí, níto aujtí /sic/," which means in Spanish: "Dónde está el diablo /where is the devil/? Dónde está el diablo? Dónde está el diablo?" As soon as the two Namákasero said this, the younger son was very much ashamed, and he said to Miriápura Turíkaró: "I will not enter the maloca of Bajsebowí because they are calling me Uajtí" (22). Then Miriápura Turíkaró said to

22. Spirit; devil.

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according to the cures or /279/ other extraordinary deeds that they managed to achieve. The more famous ones will attract a clientele from great distances and even from other tribes. Even some of the civilized who have settled in those regions let themselves be influenced, and they too avail themselves of the services of the pajé.

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The influence of the pajé is such that the very foods of the sick person will be subjected to his blowing, Baxséke. Even the remedies given by the civilized are presented to the pajé, who will blow on them in order to give them efficacy. If the sick person gets better, the merit will naturally belong to the pajé. If he does not happen to improve and dies, he will explain that it is a matter of a malefice of another "stronger pajé," or because of having taken a remedy of the whites, or food "not blown," or, finally, of having been overcome by a new and unexpected malefice before the pajé could be called.

And if it is declared that nothing more can be done, the patient will be abandoned as somebody fatally condemned to death; and not infrequently the relatives will deny him any assistance, and even food itself.

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The patient, many times, after such a verdict from the pajé, will hasten his own death, refusing other medicines from the civilized and any food or drink (see V 23, stoicism).

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It has happened that the pajé might declare the maloca or the povoado irremediably dangerous, and then the Indians will not have any hesitation about abandoning it and will move to another place, in spite of all the difficulties (29).

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29. It has likewise happened that after a few years they return to the same place. In 1932 an outbreak of malaria killed about 70 Indians in Taracua-ponta, river Uaupés. Although none of the students of the missionary school fell victim to it, the Indians, in fear, abandoned the locality. In 1947 they started to return.

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/footnote 83 cont./ the commotion of an infernal orgy of two days. In front of their own dead brother they will burst out in a desperate cry, and with the same aptness they will pass to the noisiest and most indecent laughter."

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Nevertheless, as soon as they notice that he has died -- (perhaps the catastrophe already happened some time ago, and they did not notice it; or there has been a mistake, he has not died yet) -- the men and women present start the elegy-weeping, uxtisé (84).

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84. Pe. Humberto Limpens, Montfortian, in the early days of the Mission of Teresita (Colombia, river Papurí), saw a "weeping," in which primarily the pajés blew smoke for a long time over the dead woman, who was married, while the men shouted threats against the enemies who were the cause of the death. Afterwards the women came, and, placing themselves in a semicircle, began the lamentations.

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The weeping that took place on June 24, 1956, in the hospital of the Mission of Parí-cachoeira (river Tíquié) and which two Sisters in charge of nursing witnessed was also interesting. A young wife had died as the result of a stillbirth. She was the stepdaughter of the late tuxáua of Parí-cachoeira, Júlio, father of the present local chief. There had been previous treatment with the pajés; and even after she was already in a condition of extreme gravity and she had been taken to the hospital, her mother, of the Tuyuka tribe, had tried to take

/369 cont./

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/footnote 84 cont./ her out of there in order to subject her again to the rites of the pajés. As soon as the catastrophe happened, in the very room of death, in the hospital, the weeping by men and women, accompanied simultaneously by dancing, began at the sides of the hammock that contained the body. Among the participants in the wailing and dances was a young Tukano woman who had taken the course in midwifery in Manaus. The dancers were distributed in pairs of the same sex, and the dances were intermixed with small hops, beating at this moment, first the arms, then the legs. The husband, also present, did not participate in the dances, but he did participate in the weeping. Later, once the body had been moved to the entrance room of the hospital, the old mother lay down on the floor, under the hammock where the daughter had died, with her legs and arms open, singing the elegy-weeping.

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The men utter cries and imprecations against those who caused the death; because every death, so they think, is a true murder perpetrated by some enemy by means of a malefice. The women too, appropriately called uxtfra (Uaupés uxtfra), mourners, between exclamations and with /370/ very sentimental thoughts, do the eulogy of the dead and imprecate against the pajés or persons who cast the spell, the alleged

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causa mortis. They lower their heads, draw the hair over the face, the tears come in abundance, and they constantly collect them with the index finger of the right hand and shake them to the ground. And they proceed in this way for a long time, in a characteristic intonation, in which they go from the lowest notes to the shrillest ones. And the mourners succeed one another in turn in this panegyric-imprecatory weeping. The last notes of their wailing have hardly been lost in the air and their last tears filtered into the floor of the maloca before the shadows of emotion clear away from their faces, and the mourner will go on to talk gaily with her companions, with her habitual good humor and noisy laughter.

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The mother or wife, during the wailing, will be squatting or seated on the little seats beside the deceased, and with the right hand drawing lines on the ground. At other times they rub the hands on the cadaver and then stretch the arms in the direction of space, as if they were casting there the curses or the malefice that took the life of the deceased.

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At times three or more women gather in a closed circle, in which their heads touch, and the principal mourner extends her arms, as if to embrace them all by the nape of the neck; it is what is called ŷe'Ē-kea-uxtisĕ, weeping embraced. The first mourner then starts to do the eulogy of the dead one, as if directing a dialogue with the others, who repeat her final words; or they address interlocutions, all of it intermixed with sobs and cries.

Once the panegyric-weeping is performed, which may last minutes or whole hours (85),

85. The weeping for the death of
Júlio, tuxáua of Parí-cachoeira, on

/370 cont. /

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/footnote 85 cont. / July 5, 1954,
lasted from 3 o'clock in the early
morning until 10 o'clock in the
day, when the burial was concluded.

calm is restored, as if nothing abnormal had happened
(86).

86. If it is a husband or child who
died, the sorrow at times is sincere
and prolonged, and, in order to
distract themselves, they go around
to other malocas.

They resume their jobs, meal, or conversations with the
habitual typical laughter.

If by chance it was during the night that the death
took place, they customarily, after the weeping, stay up
during the night, but talking gaily and drinking chibé,
without concerning themselves about the dead one any
longer.

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The relatives, as they arrive to visit the family,
casually or because they have learned of the death, have
the same relief of noisy and laudatory wailing. On the
occasion of the burial they /371/ reinstitute the weeping.

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When some relative who lives farther away, even if it is
months later, meets the widower or widow for the first
time after the death of the spouse, he places his hands on
the shoulder and not infrequently the scene of the wailing
is renewed.

The simple news of some death is also apt to pro-
voke the official wailing. It is to be noted that, although
the dead person might be from the husband's tribe, many
times the latter will not show any sign of grief, will calmly
continue his gay chatting, leaving to his wife (who is from
another tribe) the duty of wailing for the dead.

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2) The interment. There is no fixed interval between the verification of the death and the burial. One even notices a certain anxiety to bury the corpse as soon as possible. And the cases in which the preparations for this start when the individual is still alive, and even has use of his senses, are not infrequent (88).

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88. One of the Salesian Missionary Sisters, passing through Umarí (river Uaupés), saw in the maloca four holes in the floor. Surprised she asked the reason. It was that there were four children with whooping cough, and, foreseeing their death, they had already prepared the graves.

Another striking episode took place in Taracua (river Uaupés) in 1934. The tuxáua Miguel, of the Tukano tribe, was near death, and his subjects prepared the coffin-canoe and placed the sick man there, almost suffocating him with his clothes, hammock, eating cuia, etc. The Missionaries arrived still in time, and, noticing that he was still alive, they moved him to the hospital, and actually he did not die until three days later.

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Although they are familiar with ceramics and know how to make vessels of large dimensions, they are not in the habit of burying the cadavers in vessels, nor are there any indications of their having had such a custom.

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The burial is permanent, and the traditional form is the canoe-coffin, yuxkô-sô-korô, that is, in a canoe (89).

89. Occasionally, lacking a canoe, we have heard of burial in the caxiri tub in Teresita (Colombia, river Papuri). Pe. André Linssen, Missionary of the Monfort Congregation, did a burial in a mat in Acuaricuara (Colombia,

derer, having killed one sibmate, is surely planning to kill others. However, such reasoning is more appropriate in cases of sorcery than in cases of direct assault.

Among the *Hehénewa*, I was told, a man was beating his wife when his own brother, who had no apparent cause to do so, intervened. This led to a quarrel. While they were quarreling they heard a monkey howl, always an omen of the impending death of a kinsman. In alarm, each took his gun and together they went to the river to shoot the monkey. There the wife-beater shot and killed his brother, claiming that it was an accident. However, he decided he had better leave. Later that day, when a third brother learned what had happened, he set out to find and kill his fugitive brother. The police, however, learned of the shooting and induced him to find the killer and turn him over to them. This he did. The culprit spent some months in jail and was released. By that time anger had subsided and the brothers were reconciled.

Should a man kill his wife only her kin will avenge her. There is no one to avenge or punish a father who kills his children. The only example of such crimes that I have is of a madman, but it does illustrate the point. According to the account given me, this man, crazed by hunger, killed and ate his children. He then attacked his wife, cut off one of her breasts, roasted it in the fire, and ate it. No one interfered "because it was his own wife and children." The man then cut a piece from his own thigh. The people watching said, "Let him do this. It is a good thing that he should die." They watched as he then cut his throat and died.

I also learned of another example of unavenged death. An old *Bahúkiwa* man had died and the inquest named a man of a related sib as the sorcerer responsible for the death. The sibmen threatened vengeance. Some days later the alleged sorcerer innocently came to pay his respects to the dead. He was coolly received, but no hand was raised against him. When I asked about it I was told that no one felt close enough to the old man to want to avenge him. The widow was still angry, but women are not avengers even by means of sorcery.

Theft to the Cubeo means stealing food from a garden. Thieves pull up manioc tubers in the dead of night and they steal *mihí*. Both offenses are regarded as serious and incomprehensible. The theft of *mihí* is all the more culpable because it is a sacred drug. Such theft is correctly interpreted by the Cubeo as malice and is attributed only to men. If caught in the act the thief, even if a sibmate, is severely beaten or killed. Theft of objects is simply not acknowledged.

- 843 cake when it is still on the oven, the child will be born deformed.
 826 Harelip, for example, is attributed to this delinquency in eating.
 [302] The pregnant woman, on the other hand, endangers her child by generosity with body paint. Women commonly give one another genipa paint. If a pregnant woman should give genipa paint to another, her child will be born without the blue marking at the base of its spine. A child without such a marking, which is called *vei* — the term for the genipa pigment — will die very soon.
 • [763]
 844 When the mother has brought the newborn infant to the maloca
 854 on a manioc tray lined with cloth (in the past with soft bark fibers)
 302 she proceeds immediately to bathe it in warm water, washing its body clean. She then paints the infant's face with red spots to make it resemble a jaguar child, and the rest of its body with the same red pigment. The spots will protect the infant against the jaguar, while the red body pigment, which is common ceremonial adornment,
 [789] gives the infant human status at once. Finally, she ties cord bands on the baby's wrists so that its arms will grow heavy. Having done these things the mother presents the child to its grandmother, her mother-in-law, and goes to her hammock.
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 546 For the next three days, husband and wife spend most of their time in their respective hammocks. They move about as little as possible, leaving the house only for excretion, and avoid going near the river. They drink little water, eat only stale manioc bread and, if they wish, ants. They talk to no one but are looked after by others in the house, who bring water, keep the fire going, bring them their dry food. If the woman blows at the fire to stir it up she will develop a terrible temper. The grandmother has charge of the infant, giving it up only for nursing. Almost anything the parents might do at this time would be harmful to the infant. If either stubbed a toe it would damage the infant's toe; peppers would burn the infant's insides; it would choke on a fishbone; and so the parents must avoid these foods. This period of three days is an isolation period for the parents. Their other children, if any, are taken into another household. When Korch-Grünberg was among the Cubeo he noticed that the couple was actually hidden behind screens. Among the *Bahukiuwa* the isolation was less complete. Informants had told me that the period of isolation, which is known simply as "resting," lasted ten days. However, the several instances that I observed lasted only three days, perhaps a concession to modernity.¹ But Father Giaccone

¹ One informant explained that the restrictions last until the infant's fetal skin comes off, that is, three or four days.

CUBEO

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THE CUBEO

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as well. The fixed relationships of mutual obligation are, as has been seen, between husband and wife, between parents and dependent children, between unmarried brother and sister, and between ceremonial friends. These relationships either do not apply to the aged, or, if they do, they may not be of great value to them. Generally speaking, the aged can depend upon those who are younger and vigorous only for the generalized sibs benefits of sustenance and companionship. The deprivation of the aged is in what one might mistakenly call "the nonessentials." There is no one to buy an old lady a new petticoat or to get for an old man commercial tobacco. The aged do not protest such neglect because they acknowledge their lack of claim. Nonetheless, they feel their neglect and loss of status keenly enough. When I was among the *Bahúkien*, an aged lady employed all her senile charms to wheedle from me a new petticoat. Her husband, a very proud old man, deigned to accept only an occasional cigarette. From time to time he brought me fish and the old lady fetched me some of her small garden produce to reciprocate my favors.

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888 The old must look after themselves. The very old *Bahúkien* couple maintained a semblance of an Independent household. The old woman, unable to carry a load of manioc, no longer gardened, but she fetched firewood and looked after children. She cooked for her husband. Her daughter-in-law provided her with manioc cake. The old man was still a good fisherman, contributing to the maloxa. Besides, he was a consultant on many matters, particularly on trees to be used in manufactures.

[180] The focus of Cubeo culture is upon the vigorous household heads. [769] The aged simply fall out of things. They are entitled to no particular respect, nor have they cause to be feared as spirits-to-be, for the Cubeo are interested only in their first ancestors and not in the spirits of the more recent dead.

DEATH

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761 Death may be attributed by the Cubeo to natural causes such as accidents, violence, old age, but if it is the result of illness, it must be laid to some agency that has willed it. The most common agency is human. Whether the agency is human or supernatural the reaction to death is patterned on grief, anger, and fear. The Cubeo reaction to death is to give full rein to grief and anger and to short-circuit as quickly as possible the forebodings that what has happened to one may happen to all. The only deaths I heard about or witnessed were

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The only deaths I heard about or witnessed were all attributed to human sorcery so that I have no information on the Cubeco response to natural death or to death attributed to spirits. Mourning is extensive but does not impose unusually onerous duties or restrictions upon the survivors. Mourning goes through three phases. In the first, from the moment of death to burial, which follows quickly, the immediate kin and all sibilates yield to their spontaneous emotions, but up to a point, for the ritualization of emotion sets in quickly. In the second, which is the period from burial to the great mourning ceremony, the nearest female kin of the household — wife, mother, sister — accept the burden of mourning. Finally, in the third phase, the entire living cosmos of the Cubeco — people, Ancients, birds, beasts, fish, insects, and demons — join in the mourning. This third phase, an intricate ceremony, is described in a separate chapter. The dead, as already indicated, are buried beneath the dance floor of the house, emphasizing, it seems to me, the importance the Cubeco place on the house itself rather than upon mere locality. [82]

I was present at the last hours of old João, a *Bahukhuwa* and *bahukdyo* of the headman. He had been ill for several weeks, the medicine men had given up on him, and his death was, therefore, not unexpected. The Cubeco are not solicitous of the dying. Once its inevitability has been accepted death is awaited almost with indifference. Father Giaccone (1949, p. 29), speaking for the neighboring Tucano, also observed that once the illness appears to be fatal the patient is given up for lost. Such patients, he adds, will be buried alive. When death seemed near — the old man was breathing with difficulty with a dry rasp — his wife took up the death watch at his hammock. At the moment of death her loud wailing awakened the house and all rushed to surround the hammock except the headman and his wife. Since it is the duty of the headman to preside over the inquest that follows upon the first outburst of grief he must plan upon a properly timed arrival. A shaman of another sib who was in the house also did not intrude upon the mourners, both in his role as shaman and as a sib outsider. [622]

The old woman, truly grief-stricken, had embraced her dead husband's body in the hammock and rocked over it, moaning and wailing. She withdrew, however, when the younger brother of João arrived. He felt for the heartbeat and then covered the old man's face with some rags that had been the sick man's blanket. The women had all gathered to one side of the hammock and they wept continuously, chorusing the loud and emphatic wailing of the widow. The brother fetched his shotgun, moving slowly and grimly. He loaded

bidinous nocturnal hunter, and not in the sun. The sun, they say, is merely the moon giving heat and light during the day, "when people need it." As sun, *ayyd* lacks anthropomorphic character. The interest of the Cubeo in the moon rather than in the sun seems related to their concept of nightfall as the sacred time. Almost all ceremonies are night ceremonies, whereas daylight is the time for work. Apart from his erotic role the moon is a hunter with a stone-tipped spear (*temidjo*). Bits of the blade chip off which the finder can use as potent sorcery magic, killing his victim by poisoning. The moon is also an opener of graves of those who eat a seed the Cubeo call *óthai* and which is used as fish bait. The Cubeo tell the story of the man who hoped to steal the lamp of the moon (*djuwaibo*) by covering it with a pottery dish. Some light showed and *ayyd* secured the lamp to the back of his neck and flew off.

When there is an eclipse of the moon, the Cubeo say that the spirits of the dead are being dispersed. They also fear that the moon is dying. As the moon reddens I have witnessed them running about shouting to one another in genuine terror that the moon is dying. They believe that those who live in the direction from which the eclipse shadow is moving will die. The moon sickens of the same sorcery afflictions that beset humans, although they do not believe that one of their medicine men has the power to sicken the moon.

HUMAN SPIRITS

The soul is called *umé*, which also means "breath" and "breath." As a spirit entity the soul is referred to as *umémakū* (or *umé-mako*). The soul leaves the body during dreams, returning as the dreamer awakes. The *Bahukiwu*, at least those with whom I discussed the subject, did not believe that the *umé* might fail to return and so cause death. Death and illness result, they insisted, from something entering the body. At death, the *umé* leaves the body permanently, journeying after a suitable interval to a nearby river, dwelling of the spirits. After death the *umé* has human form. It can be heard talking and can be seen by the shaman. The spirits of people who have been adulterers, uncooperative, breakers of the bonds of ritual friendship, or in any other way markedly unsocial assume an animal

pomorphic beliefs about the sun. Linguistic evidence suggests also that the concept of sun and of time is built around the notion of visibility. Thus, direction, having nothing to do with visibility, is based on the *ayyd* form.

* Koch-Grünberg (1915-16) also noted *uméde* (pulse) and *uménde* (heart). I believe that the connotation of the term is revealed by the verb *umédani*, which means "to get up," "to rise."

A Death

that José was the one man who could take us through to the mouth of the Piraparaná. 114

Throughout the whole journey the factor which played more on our minds than anything else was uncertainty. The way back over the dry channels was almost out of the question and the Indians would never have taken us; the way forward appeared to be a long succession of cataracts. Then there was the question of Nestor - would he ever arrive and how long should we wait? The longer we stayed the more insistent José became about leaving. He did not enjoy his role as an interpreter, he did not like asking his fellow-Indians questions and he seemed completely indifferent to the work we were trying to do. All this was understandable but it did not ease our position.

It was cold and wet when José and Uriel left early next morning to take a load of equipment ahead. Mist hung low over the forest and the trees dripped with moisture. 'This is white rain,' said Horacio. 'It is more usual in the winter months, so perhaps we are due for a wet spell and Nestor will get through after all.' We all had doubts in our minds and now, with José gone, we had no means of talking to the people in the *maloca*.

Suddenly Kuarumey's wife ran out and grabbed Brian's arm, beckoning him to follow her inside. From the far end of the dark interior, behind the palm screens, came strange sobs. The sounds rose and fell; across the bare earthen floor a slight figure bent over the embers of a dying fire. It was Watsora whose husband had been away on a hunting expedition for nearly a week. Her naked body, lit only by a dull red glow, was doubled up. She heaved and hardly seemed able to breathe. Only the day before she had carried her heavy basket of manioc from the plantation. Now her thin, drawn face, her sagging breasts, her dishevelled hair, aged her beyond belief. A young girl clutched her around the waist and moved to and fro with the heaving figure, quietly chanting to herself. Watsora's baby son ran to his mother's side and clasping her arm began to cry. 123 763 •

Kuarumey's wife implored us to help. She pointed to the black medicine chest. Only the previous night we had given the headman aspirin, but this illness seemed much more serious than a headache. We could not be sure what was wrong. Perhaps she had an internal haemorrhage, maybe it was consumption, or was it appendicitis? We couldn't know, none of us was a doctor. Horacio was firm: 'No, we must not give her any drugs, for if she dies, then what do you think will happen to us?' For a time we argued but eventually agreed. Horacio was right: no matter what we felt, we could not afford to be held responsible for her death, nor could we interfere.

A Tukano shooting fish with a long fish arrow.

— [see p. 50-B]

Tucano

123 The wails increased, the young girl's chant grew louder as she repeated
 763 the same notes over and over. The atmosphere in the *maloca* became unbearably tense and, while Horacio read outside, we went down to the river, trying to escape a situation which we could do nothing about. Our minds were not at rest and, when Horacio's drawn figure appeared walking slowly down the sandy track, we could guess what had happened.

'Watsora died five minutes ago,' he said and went back up the path. We said little and silently followed him back to the *maloca*. On the way we passed Kuarumey's old mother. Her normally jovial face was now serious. She avoided our eyes and continued to feed her toucan with beetle grubs. Inside all was silent, the wails had ceased, even the children were quiet and their innocent curiosity had turned to wariness. There was nothing we could do except wait and keep to ourselves. The boat was downstream and we had no means of talking to anyone. The tiny black sandflies converged on us in the stifling heat of the early afternoon. A woman came over to our equipment, undid a tin and took out a handful of rice, looked at the grains, smelt them and then carefully poured them back again, wiping her hands on a kitbag when she had finished.

123 Our anxiety increased. To read or write was impossible. We left the *maloca* to walk across the forest clearing. The question of giving or not giving drugs to the woman before she died had produced one dilemma. Now the question was - what next?

764 Returning later we noticed that the earth in the centre of the floor had been disturbed and fresh yellow clay lay on the surface. None of us had actually seen the corpse, but Donald had seen the young girl, who had been wailing at Watsora's side, take the dead woman's hammock down to the river and wash it. Later we learnt that the Tucano always bury their dead inside the *maloca*. The method is much like that of the Noanamá and the highland burials of the ancient Chibcha. They dig a trench and excavate a horizontal vault about three feet beneath the surface. The corpse, with the knees bound to the chest in the foetal position, is wrapped in his own hammock or in barkcloth and then inserted in the vault which is blocked with leaves, so that earth never touches the body. With the body are placed private possessions: pottery, or a basket in the case of a woman; a bow and arrows, coca pouch or snuff-shell in the case of a man. They retain these possessions for the after-life, the happy hunting grounds where they will travel in spirit.

123 No ceremony could have taken place in so short a time, and the women continued to make cassava, as though nothing had happened. Before the death they were wailing, now they were silent. The people who had once been so ready to smile, the children who normally followed at our side, were aloof and distant. Each one of us was tense and worried and it was a relief when a new face came to the entrance of the *maloca*. He seemed familiar and we recognized one of the Indians we had first met on crossing into the head-